

The Butcher Shops of Harrisburg's Old Eighth Ward, 1860-1916

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Described as the capital of an increasingly urban and progressive Pennsylvania at the turn of the twentieth century, Harrisburg was a city following the trends of the nation's larger city centers.¹ Located in the agricultural region of the Keystone State, Harrisburg was attempting to establish itself as a legitimate locus of political power and respectability. The first step in this progressive movement was the paving of main streets, the establishment of parks and recreational spaces, the modernization of the water system, and the revitalization of the police and fire departments.² Unfortunately for the residents of the Old Eighth Ward, the positive aspects of this "City Beautiful" movement also carried life-changing negatives.

The "city" they knew—the neighborhoods comprising the Old Eighth Ward—began to gradually disappear as the Capital Park Extension project gathered speed and consumed what had been their homes, streets, markets, hotels, saloons, and places of employment. This destruction in the name of progress, however, did not go unnoticed by those living outside of the affected area due to the work of J. Howard Wert, a noted educator, journalist, and Civil War veteran.³ Wert wrote a series of editorials for the Harrisburg *Patriot* entitled, "Passing of the Old Eighth," countering the positive themes so often found on the editorial page of this newspaper. Wert attempted to challenge his readers to consider the effects of progress by shedding light upon the unique features, personalities, and institutions of an area deemed disposable by the government.

1 Michael Barton and Jessica Dorman, eds., *Harrisburg's Old Eighth Ward* (Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2002), 9. This paper has been edited by Stephanie Patterson Gilbert, webmaster of *Harrisburg's Old Eighth Ward*, found at <http://www.old8thward.com>.

2 Barton, *Harrisburg's Old Eighth Ward*, back cover.

3 Barton, *Harrisburg's Old Eighth Ward*, 9-14.

The April 23, 1913, edition of the *Patriot* included an article from the series by Wert concerning the State Street Market, an institution he referred to as “the most unique market Harrisburg has ever contained.”⁴ While the story Wert tells of the State Street Market is unusual, it was the mention of the public market that sparked the subject of this research. The public market, as described by Helen Tangires, was more than just a place to buy and sell fresh food. These buildings and spaces encouraged farmers, street vendors, food merchants, and consumers to forge relationships with one another that were based on their common identity as citizens.⁵ With that idea in mind, a closer analysis of one of the most prominent members of the food merchant community, the butcher, became the focus of this paper.

Headlining most public markets were the butchers, described by Tangires as “the most flamboyant and theatrical vendors in the public markets, in part because of the history and nature of their trade.”⁶ Very few occupations were governed by tradition, religion, and cultural rules and values to the same extent as that of butcher. The goal of this research was to record the names and locations of the butchers and meat markets of Harrisburg’s Old Eighth Ward from 1860 through 1916 while attempting to determine their significance within that community.

In order to trace the existence of meat markets in the Old Eighth Ward of Harrisburg, the most important research tool proved to be the *Boyd’s Harrisburg Directory* volumes for the years 1860 through 1916, compiled by W. Harry Boyd and the 1889 map of Harrisburg from the *Roe Atlas*.⁷ The years missing from the directory include 1861-1862, 1864-1865, 1866-1867, 1867-1868, 1897, and 1901, and these years, therefore, will not be included as part of this project. This reference set provided the names, addresses, and occupations of the citizens of Harrisburg, as well as a listing of the businesses found within the city, and it provided the data

4 Barton, Harrisburg’s Old Eighth Ward, 105.

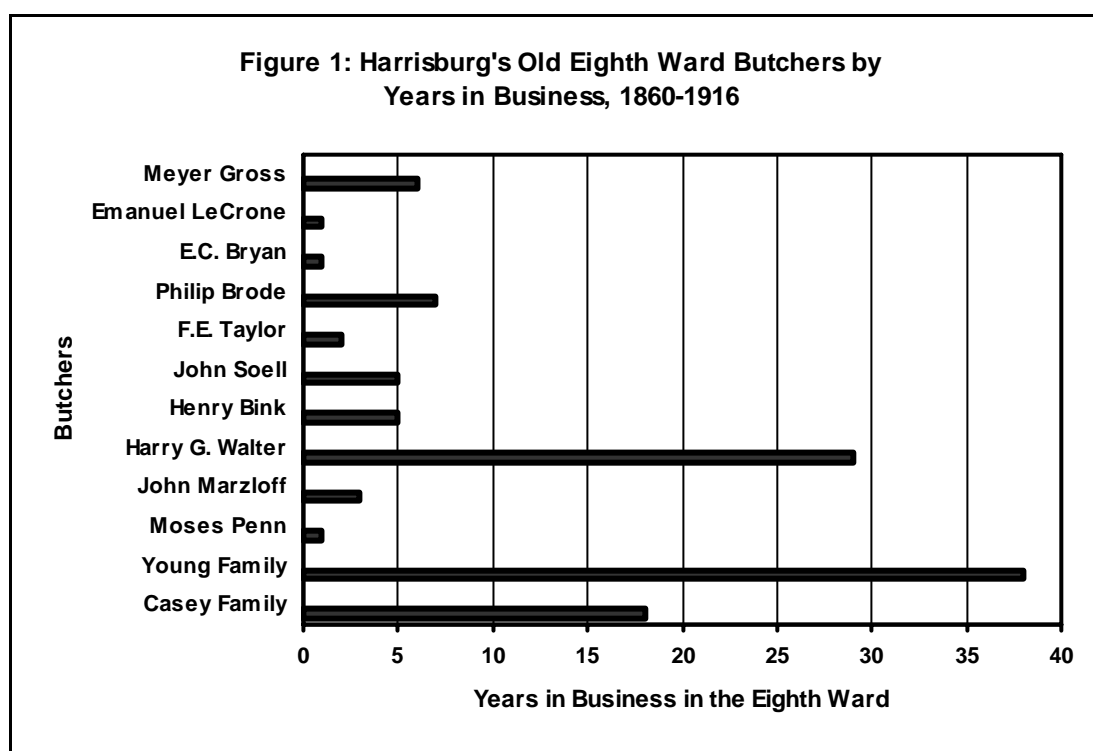
5 Helen Tangires, “Public Markets and Civic Culture in Nineteenth Century America,” speech given to the Culinary Historians of Washington, D.C., 8 February 2004.

6 Tangires, “Public Markets and Civic Culture,” 5.

7 W. Harry Boyd, *Boyd’s Harrisburg Directory: Names of Citizens, Map, and a Compendium of Government and of Public Institution* (Boyd’s Cousins, 1860-1916), hereafter *Boyd’s Directory*.

for this research. The goal of this research was not only to follow the butchers through a given time period based on their location within the ward but also to analyze their importance to the community as long-standing, established members of their respective neighborhoods.

The time frame chosen, 1860-1916, is significant because it was during the early years of this period that a shift from public markets to private shops began to take place, as many city governments deregulated the meat industry.⁸ As larger cities, such as New York and Philadelphia, began to undergo this change, the city of Harrisburg did as well; it was eager to be viewed as a progressive city. Whereas the butchers' trade was considered inconceivable without the market house during the early 1800s, this trend was disrupted in the 1830s when certain butchers, in defiance of the laws, began to operate their own shops. "Shop butchers," as opposed to "market butchers," set off on their own to break up the "monopoly" of the public markets.⁹ The same change occurred in Harrisburg.



8 Jared N. Day, "To the Detriment of 'Our Own Butchers: Regulating the Nuisance Trades in Early 19th Century New York City," paper presented at the American Society for Environmental History/Forestry History Annual Conference in Durham, NC, 31 March 2001.

9 Helen Tangires, *Public Markets and Civic Culture in Nineteenth-Century America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), 68.

Two of the longest-standing butcher shops in the Eighth Ward, those belonging to John Young and John Casey, were located by their market stall numbers for the last time in the 1863-1864 directory.¹⁰ Thereafter, both butchers were identified by their shop addresses. The addresses of their butcher shops were often the same addresses provided for their residences, thus creating an image of a community shop. The butchers from whom patrons purchased their meat was a part of their daily social network. Customers had a relationship with their butcher, who was not a nameless businessman earning a dollar as would later be seen when industrialized butchering took over the meat market.

John Young, who was first listed as a victualler living just outside the ward at 106 Walnut Street by the 1843 *Boyd's Directory*, would become the founder of the oldest butcher shop in the Eighth Ward (Figure 1).¹¹ He eventually owned a large establishment on Walnut Street that would remain a family business until 1913. The first year of this study, 1860, identified two butchers, the aforementioned Young and John Casey, who together would become the main sources of butchering in the Old Eighth Ward.¹² These men are notable not only for their respective business longevity; both were involved in local politics in the ward as members of the Common Council. Young served as the Eighth Ward Tax Collector in 1874-1875 and again in 1877-1878. In 1876-1877, Young is listed as a councilman. Casey is listed as a member of the council in 1878-1879 and in 1880-1882.¹³ Lending credibility to the connection between butchers and civic duty, Tangires comments that urban folklore promoted the butcher as a man of great strength and strong character, noted for his leadership and willingness to enter public service.¹⁴

10 *Boyd's Directory*, 1863-1864.

11 *Boyd's Directory*, 1843.

12 Detailed data on Eighth Ward butchers by year is available in Appendices A-C of this article.

13 *Boyd's Directory*, 1874-1882.

14 Tangires, *Public Markets*, 63.

Although it operated beyond the scope of this study, the longevity of Young's Meat Market—fifty-three years—is worth noting. With the passing of John Young in 1888, his son, Henry F. Young, assumed control of the business and remained a constant fixture on Walnut Street, adjacent to St. Lawrence German Catholic Church, until 1913. The meat market founded by John Casey and later operated by his presumed son, Michael, began in 1860 and closed in 1890. After closing his shop, the younger Casey moved on to a career in law enforcement.¹⁵



Figure 2: Harry G. Walter's Meat Market, shown at left, was in business for 29 years in the Old Eighth Ward.

Photo: Historical Society of Dauphin County

One other meat market worth mentioning during the discussion of permanent fixtures in the community is the shop operated by Harry G. Walter from 1885 through 1916 as part of the multi-store company, Walter Brothers

Meats. The shop, pictured in Figure 2, was the last meat market claimed by the wrecking ball in the ward. A total of eleven meat markets operated in the Eighth Ward from 1860 through 1916, but only the three mentioned here remained in business for a significant period of time. During the period studied, Young, Casey, and Walter averaged twenty-eight years in business while the other nine butchers averaged just over three years in business.

Such dominance of the meat market in the Eighth Ward by Young, Casey, and Walter raises several questions pertaining to economics, social dynamics, religion, race, gender, and ethnicity that were unanswered by the city directories. One wonders why the three shops owned by Young, Casey, and Walter were able to remain a part of the Eighth Ward for so long when the others typically disappeared after four or five years in business. Was it related to the quality of

¹⁵ *Boyd's Directory*, 1891-1892.

their products or the relationships they established and the loyalty of their customers? How relative was their location in the ward to their individual success? Did the shops diversify and sell other grocery products as the market became more competitive? What impact did the presence of a holding yard and slaughterhouse of the larger butchers have on those who lived in the vicinity and the value of the property? Were there active tanneries, or other nuisance trades, in the proximity of the butcher shops?

Other questions developed as a result of this exploration of butcher shops of the Old Eighth Ward relate more to the occupation of butchering in the context of religion, race, gender, and ethnicity. One cannot discuss the occupation of butchering in the nineteenth century without placing it in the context of ethnicity and religion. The contrast offered by *Lafcadio Hearn's America: Ethnographic Sketches and Editorials* between the occupational practices of the Gentile and Jewish butcher is one that makes the reader realize these men followed very different methods to complete the same task.¹⁶ Therefore, one wonders if any of the shops found in the Eighth Ward were owned by a Jewish individual or operated by a Sochet, or Jewish butcher. Were any of the shops owned or operated by African Americans? And finally, what role did the wives and/or other female family members play in the day-to-day operation of the businesses?

The study of Harrisburg's Old Eighth Ward invites further exploration into the numerous side streets of nineteenth century urban life that were changed forever in the name of progress. While we may look upon the beautiful Pennsylvania State Capitol Complex and see it alongside the City Beautiful Movement, we must not overlook the lives that were disrupted for this expansion. It is their stories, rich in ethnicity, culture, and history, which provide the reader glimpses into the past that should not be overlooked.

16 Simon Bronner, ed., *Lafcadio Hearn's America: Ethnographic Sketches and Editorials* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2002).

Appendix A: Butchers of the Eighth Ward, 1860-1886			
1860			1878-1879
Name	Address		Name
John Casey	Walnut n Short		John Casey
John Young	E. State c West		John Casey Jr.
			Michael Casey
1863-1864			Henry F. Young
Name	Address		John Young
John Casey	8 City Market, h E. State n 4th		
John Young	25 City Market, h 110 Walnut		1879-1880
			Name
			Address
			John Casey
1869-1870			Moses Penn
Name	Address		Henry Young
John Casey	Ash al, R cor E. State and Cowden		
Michael Casey	623 Forster n Cowden		1880-1882
John Young	508 Walnut		Name
			Address
			John Casey
1871-1872			John Casey Jr.
Name	Address		Michael Casey
John Casey	State cor West alley		John Marzloff
Michael Casey	619 Forster		
Henry Young	602 South Street		1883
John Young	508 Walnut Street		Name
John Young Jr.	508 Walnut Street		Address
			John Casey Jr.
			Michael Casey
1872-1873			John Marzolf
Name	Address		Henry F. Young
John Casey	Cowden cor Forster h West n State		John Young
John Casey Jr.	506 West al		
Michael Casey	619 Forster		1884-1885
Henry F. Young	512 Walnut Street		Name
			Address
			John Casey
1874-1875			Michael Casey
Name	Address		John Marzolf
John Casey Jr.	h West al n State		Henry Young
Michael Casey	h 619 Forster		John Young
Henry F. Young	506 Walnut, h 512 do		
			1885-1886
	1876-1877		Name
Name	Address		Address
John Casey	425 East State		Michael Casey
John Casey Jr.	506 West		Harry G. Walter
Michael Casey	619 Forster		Henry F. Young
Henry F. Young	506 Walnut		John Young
1877-1878			
Name	Address		
John Casey	425 State		
John Casey Jr.	623 Forster		
Michael Casey	619 Forster		
Henry F. Young	506 Walnut, h 512		

Appendix B: Butchers of the Eighth Ward, 1887-1904			
1887			1895
Name	Address		Name
Henry Bink	424 Walnut Street, h do		John Soell
John Casey	501 State Street		Harry G. Walter
Michael Casey	603 State St. & 818 Cowden St.		Henry F. Young
Harry G. Walter	434 State Street, h do		
Henry Young	506 Walnut Street, h 508		1896
			Name
1888			John Soell
Name	Address		Harry G. Walter
Henry Bink	424 Walnut Street, h do		Henry F. Young
John Casey	h 501 State Street		
Michael Casey	818 Cowden St. & 603 E. State, h do		1898
Harry Walter	434 State Street, h do		Name
Henry Young	506 Walnut Street, 508 h do		F.E. Taylor
			428 Walnut
			Harry G. Walter
			Henry F. Young
1889			506 Walnut Street, h 508
Name	Address		
Henry Bink	424 Walnut Street h do		1899
Michael Casey	818 Cowden, 603 E. State St., h do		Name
Harry G. Walter	434 State Street, h do		Philip Brode
Henry F. Young	506 Walnut Street, h 508		121 Angle Ave., 523 South St.
			Harry G. Walter
			434 State Street, h do
			Henry F. Young
			506 Walnut Street, h 508
1890			
Name	Address		1900
Henry Bink	424 Walnut Street, h do		Name
Michael Casey	818 Cowden, 603 E. State St., h do		Philip Brode
Harry G. Walter	434 State Street, h do		121 Angle Ave.
Henry F. Young	506 Walnut Street, h 508		F.E. Taylor
			428 Walnut Street
			Harry G. Walter
			434 State Street, h do
			Henry F. Young
			506 Walnut Street, h 508
1891			
Name	Address		1902
Henry Bink	424 Walnut Street, h do		Name
Harry G. Walter	434 State Street, h do		Harry G. Walter
Henry F. Young	506 Walnut Street, h 508		434 State Street, h do
			Henry F. Young
			506 Walnut Street, h 508
1892			
Name	Address		1903
John Soell	424 Walnut Street		Name
Harry G. Walter	434 State Street, h do		Philip Brode
Henry F. Young	506 Walnut Street, h 508		120 Angle Ave.
			E.C. Bryan
			426 Walnut Street
			Harry G. Walter
			434 State Street, h do
			Henry F. Young
			506 Walnut Street, h 508
1893			
Name	Address		1904
John Soell	424 Walnut Street		Name
Harry G. Walter	434 State Street, h do		Philip Brode
Henry F. Young	506 Walnut Street, h 508		121 Angle Avenue
			Emanuel LeCrone
			428 Walnut Street
			Harry G. Walter
			434 State Street, h do
1894			Henry F. Young
Name	Address		506 Walnut Street, h 508
John Soell	428 Walnut Street		
Harry G. Walter	434 State Street, h do		
Henry F. Young	506 Walnut Street, h 508		

Appendix C: Butchers of the Eighth Ward, 1905-1916			
1905			1910
Name	Address		Name
Philip Brode	121 Angle Avenue		Meyer Gross
Meyer Gross	428 & 430 Walnut St., h do		Harry G. Walter
Harry G. Walter	434 State Street, h do		Henry F. Young
Henry F. Young	506 Walnut Street, h 508		
			1911
1906			Name
Name	Address		Address
Philip Brude (sp)	121 Angle Avenue		Harry G. Walter
Meyer Gross	428 & 430 Walnut St., h do		Henry F. Young
Harry G. Walter	434 State Street, h do		
Henry F. Young	506 Walnut Street, h 508		1912
			Name
			Address
			Harry G. Walter
1907			Henry F. Young
Name	Address		
Philip Broude sp)	121 Angle Avenue		1913
Meyer Gross	428 & 430 Walnut St., h do		Name
Harry G. Walter	434 State Street, h do		Address
Henry F. Young	506 Walnut Street, h 508		Harry G. Walter
			Henry F. Young
1908			1914
Name	Address		Name
Meyer Gross	428 & 430 Walnut St., h do		Address
Harry G. Walter	434 State Street, h do		Harry G. Walter
Henry F. Young	506 Walnut Street, h 508		
			1915
			Name
1909			Address
Name	Address		Harry G. Walter
Meyer Gross	438(?) & 430 Walnut St., h do		
Harry G. Walter	434 State Street, h do		1916
Henry F. Young	506 Walnut Street, h 508		Name
			Address
			Harry G. Walter